

## SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

*Leopoldius brevirostris* (Germar) (Diptera: Conopidae) recorded at MV light.— On the 13. vii. 1990, whilst operating two 125-watt MV light traps for the purpose of recording moths in a woodland near Worthing in West Sussex (VC13) (OS grid ref. approx. TQ100049) I noted a conopid fly in one of the light traps. My provisional determination indicated *Leopoldius brevirostris* (Germ.), an identification later kindly confirmed by Dr S.G. Ball. The specimen, a female, was also shown to Mr D.K. Clements who agreed with the determination, although the frons appears atypical in that it is not wholly black.

The traps were operated under a canopy of oak, which were probably about 150 years old, where the bulk of the understorey had been cleared. Surrounding woodland was more dense and comprised oak, ash, maple, hazel and hawthorn. Dead wood was an abundant resource. The night was breezy with a clear, starlit sky, the temperature was not recorded.

As this species is probably parasitic on social wasps, possibly of the genus *Vespula* (Hymenoptera) (Smith, 1969), it may be worth reporting here that an example of the bee moth *Aphomia sociella* (Linnaeus) (Lepidoptera, Pyralidae) was also recorded. The larvae of this species are found in the nests of bees and wasps (Goater, 1986). This suggests that this micro-habitat was available to the fly in the area.

This is apparently the tenth British example of this species (D.K. Clements, pers.comm.) the species being previously recorded from Berks., Cambs., Glos., Hants., Oxon., Worc., Surrey and Kent (Clements, 1989).— M. Parsons, The Forge, Russells Green, Ninfield, nr. Battle, East Sussex.

## REFERENCES

- Clements, D.K. 1989. The occurrence of *Leopoldius brevirostris* (Germar) (Dipt., Conopidae) in Britain with notes on its distinction from *L. signatus* (Weidemann). *Entomologists Mon. Mag.* 125: 153–156.
- Goater, B. 1986. *British pyralid moths*. Harley Books, Colchester.
- Smith, K.G.V. 1969. *Diptera Conopidae. Handbk Ident. Br. Insects* Vol. X part 3 (a), Royal Entomological Society of London.

**Are pink sawflies distasteful to spiders?**—On 22.vii. 1990, in Nunhead Cemetery, London SE15, I saw a small orange-pink sawfly (something like *Nematus ribesii* Scop.) fly straight into the circular orb web of the garden spider *Araneus diadematus* Clerk. But instead of struggling to free itself, the sawfly folded its wings and held its legs and antennae close to its body, feigning death and hanging motionless from the three or four strands of silk which had ensnared it. The spider, at the centre of the web did not seem to react immediately, as if confused by the lack of movement within the web. It tapped the web with its front legs, and slowly made its way to the suspended sawfly about 5 cm away. After about 30 seconds it found the insect and embraced it with several of its legs as if to start spinning web around its prey victim. But instead of winding it round with thread, the *Araneus* extracted the sawfly from the web and dropped it onto the ground, 20 cm below. After a few seconds of wing-stretching and antenna-cleaning, the sawfly flew off apparently unharmed.

Spiders have chemosensitive hairs on their legs, enabling them to judge the nature, not just the presence, of their prey. In this case, the spider may have identified the insect in its web as an unsuitable or unpalatable object, and accordingly ejected it.— Richard A. Jones, 13 Bellwood Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3DE.